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CONTACT: Maria Velasquez, Press Secretary (619) 235-5725 (*pager & voicemail*)
Michael Scahill, MWWD Supervising Public Information Officer (858) 292-6403

IGNORING SEWAGE AND GREASE SPILLS WILL EARN BUSINESS OWNERS A DATE IN COURT *SAN DIEGO CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE PROSECUTES HOTEL AND RESTAURANT OWNERS*

San Diego, CA – Sewage spills happen! But if business owners ignore sewage and grease spills that originate from their property they may have more than a smelly mess to deal with. The business owner may have to face the City Attorney's Environmental Crimes Prosecution Team. And that's exactly what happened to the Quality Inn located on Nimitz Boulevard in Point Loma. The owners pleaded no contest to violating the City of San Diego's Storm Water Ordinance for a sewage spill that occurred over a sixteen-hour period in March of last year. Approximately 14,000 gallons of raw sewage spilled onto City streets and storm drains and into San Diego Bay. The storm drains are separate from and not connected to the sewer system. Quality Inn will pay more than \$8,100 in fines and costs as a result of the recent settlement. "If any business fails to act quickly, once a sewage spill from their property is identified, they will be held accountable," said City Attorney Casey Gwinn.

The City Attorney's Environmental Crimes Prosecution Team consists of one deputy city attorney, Kathryn Lange, and one senior investigator, William Bartleman. Working with several state and local enforcement agencies, they investigate and prosecute every manner of smelly case, whether it's sewage, oil or acid spills or illegal dumping of trash on our beaches. These spills affect the water quality at our beaches and bays.

The Quality Inn case was jointly investigated by the San Diego Port District's Harbor Police and the City Attorney's Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit. The City's Metropolitan Waste Water Department (MWWD) also assisted in the investigation. "The City takes storm water violations very seriously

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and this case is such an example. We are all partners in the effort to keep our waters clean - City

staff, citizens

and businesses-and we expect everyone to act responsibly for the benefit of all," stated Christopher Toth, MWWD's Deputy Director. *Sewage spills in the City should be reported immediately by calling (619) 515-3525.*

In an unrelated case, the City filed a civil enforcement case against the Mr. Chick restaurant located on Murphy Canyon road. The complaint alleges that the restaurant has violated the City's Food Establishment Wastewater ordinance. Restaurants that produce grease in the City of San Diego are required to catch cooking grease in a grease trap before the grease enters the sewer system. According to MWWD spokesperson Michael Scahill, "Cooking grease is the second major cause of sewer spills in San Diego. The spilled sewage may eventually reach San Diego's bays, rivers, and beaches causing unsafe conditions and temporary closures. "

The Mr. Chick restaurant refused to install the appropriate type of grease trap. Now the restaurant also faces the environmental crimes prosecution team, possible civil penalties and an injunction.

Where spills may occur, property owners and businesses need to be ready to manage and properly cleanup the spill. The City's Think Blue Program encourages property owners, businesses and citizens to practice the 3 Cs: control, contain, and capture. Control the discharge to reduce the extent of the spill. Contain the spill to prevent it from entering the storm water conveyance system (street, gutter, culvert, canyon.) Capture the discharge with a mop or wet-vac. Washing down a spill is not permitted. Washing down a spill only pushes the smelly and potentially dangerous material further into the storm drain and violates the City's Stormwater Ordinance.

"We appreciate the dedicated efforts of the San Diego City Attorney's Office in taking a tough stance on environmental crime," noted San Diego BayKeeper Executive Director Bruce Reznik. "It is important to address the harm caused by such crimes and to send the message to others that there are consequences for polluting our waters."

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